

Our Special Guests Today

We are honored to welcome two guest preachers today. David will be preaching in the morning service and Dr. Jedidiah Janisse will be filling the pulpit for the evening service. Please pray for Pastor Doug as he is away in Maryland helping a friend in need.

David Birnie is a third year student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where he anticipates graduating in May with a Master of Divinity. David has been married to Krista for nearly 10 years and they have three children: Annika (5), Micah (2), and Nate (7 mo). Before seminary, David was doing college ministry with Reformed University Fellowship at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California for a couple of years, followed by directing his church's youth ministry in Silicon Valley for five years.

Jedidiah Janisse, DDS, lives in Hartland VT, with his wife Margaret and three boys, Joshua, Micah and Jonah. He and his family are members at *The Quechee Church*. He has been a resident in Vermont for more than 30 years, practicing as a dentist since 2007, and has served in ministry since his youth. He is a recent graduate with honors from Liberty University earning a Master of Divinity degree in biblical studies, with a heart purpose to influence people to pursue their God-given direction.

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional

First Congregational Church of Woodstock

David Birnie
January 5th, 2020
Twelfth Day of Christmas

Morning Service:

Luke 19: 1 – 10

Jesus Came to Seek and Save the Lost

1. Jesus Seek Sinners.
2. Jesus Stays with Sinners.
3. Jesus Saves Sinners.

In *Amazing Grace* we sing, "I once was lost, but now I am found." We all suffer from the chronic disease of lostness, but fortunately, Zacchaeus shows us, "the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." Jesus, the Promised Messiah, came to find his lost sheep. Nobody thought that a greedy, despised tax collector, collaborator with Rome, could be considered one of Jesus' lost sheep. But Jesus thought otherwise. And fortunately for us, no matter how far off course we've veered, Jesus comes and says, "Here I am, I must stay with you." It's his divine directive to seek after his sheep. To seek after us. To stay with us. To save us.

Evening Service:

Dr. Jedidiah Janisse
James 1: 2 – 4

Faith Tested, Fortitude Approved

It is Important that We Are Reminded:

1. God Regards Trials as Opportunities to Focus on Grace.
2. God Sees Trials as Opportunities to Build Fortitude in Faith.
3. God Sees Trials as Means for Building Godly Character.

The next time you encounter a trial, submit your thinking to God so that he can guide you to cherish it as an opportunity to be joyful. Be comforted by sharing God's understanding that trials have purpose, to strengthen and encourage us. Therefore, be confident, with an enduring faith, to submit to God's plan in the process of perfection. He will complete his work in your life. How am I ever going to be able to do this? *We* do not do it ourselves or in our own strength. It is our God who is faithful to his word, unchanging. It is our God who knows us inside and out and is always with us, capable of refining us, to make us perfect in his sight. It is our God who is eternally undefeated in battle, and has never failed his people.

Taking Gathered Worship Home

Sunday AM

READ **Luke 19:1-10; Ezekiel 34:11-16**. DISCUSS, What does God promise Israel? How does Jesus demonstrate this with Zacchaeus? THANK God for His promises and His forever faithfulness.

Sunday PM

READ **James 1:2-18, Philippians 1:3-7**. DISCUSS, Why are James and Paul confident? THANK God for His faithfulness.

Monday

READ aloud **Matthew 2:1-12** [Magi]. Historically this day (1/6) the Church has celebrated the feast of the Epiphany or Gentile Christmas in honor of the wise men coming to worship Christ. DISCUSS, why is it significant for Gentiles to recognize and praise Christ? PRAISE the Lord for your salvation and close by praying together: “Holy Messiah, promised Savior, we worship You and adore You.

Tuesday

READ **Luke 15:1-32** [Lost Found]. DISCUSS, why MUST we rejoice? PRAY, “Father God, thank You for bringing us salvation. We know that we cannot save ourselves. Thank You for taking us as Your people not because we deserved it, but so that You could purify us just as You are pure. Allow that to be our hope, our confidence, and our joy. In our blessed Savior’s name we pray. Amen.”

Wednesday

READ **Luke 5:27-32** [Jesus Calls Levi]. DISCUSS, Why does Jesus eat with such vile sinners as Levi and his tax collector friends? What is the response of the Pharisees? Why? When have you responded similarly? PRAY: “Teach us to never forget Your grace. Make us more and more grateful for all the mercy You have shown us and make us much more ready and able to show that same favor to those You place in our lives. Help us to work together as a congregation to welcome our neighbors and demonstrate the love of Christ to them. Amen.”

Thursday

READ **Luke 18:9-29** [Contrasting Righteousness]. DISCUSS, How do each of the characters in this passage view righteousness? What about Zacchaeus? What about you? PRAY, “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, You have promised from of old that You would send a Redeemer for Your people. We praise and thank You for Your faithfulness in redemption. Transform our hearts, make us joyful people because of Your steadfast love. Make our feet willingly run to You. Give our tongues boldness in proclaiming Your grace. Lead us more and more so that we can see Your face. Amen.”

Friday

READ **John 10:1-30; Ezekiel 34:11-16** [God as Shepherd]. DISCUSS, how are these passages related? What has God done with His promises? How does believing that God is faithful help you (us) to live today in ways that honor and praise Him? PRAY: “Lord, You are the good shepherd. Thank You for caring for us and making us more like You. In Your supernatural power and we pray that You would work in us to declare the glory of Christ to our neighbors, coworkers, and friends. In Christ’s name, Amen.”

Saturday

READ **Luke 19:1-10; Ezekiel 34:11-16**. DISCUSS, What have you been learning from these passages this week? PREPARE: What can you do today to enable your focus tomorrow to be on gathering together with God’s people to worship Him? PRAY: “Prepare me and the congregation of First Congregational Church of Woodstock for worshipping You tomorrow together. As You gather us in Your name, Lord Christ, enable us by Your Holy Spirit to receive one another graciously, enlighten our minds with Your holy Word, and empower us to live out Your truth with faith and repentance. Amen.”

Preaching in 2020

We are looking forward to our time together in God’s Word. We will be exploring the book of **Acts** in the morning service and **Daniel** in the evening service. Please begin reading in preparation. Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead us to not only understand His Word, but give us courage and strength to live out the reality of the Scriptures together by faith in Christ!